

Democrats' Health Care Bill Expands Government and Jeopardizes Access to Care

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Mr. Speaker, every Member of the United States House of Representatives is privileged to serve the people of their districts. I am honored to work for the people of Kansas, the place that has been my home my entire life. Tomorrow it is expected that we will be called to vote on health care reform legislation. While most of the focus here in Washington has been on the politics surrounding this vote, back home they care about what this legislation will mean to them, their families, the businesses they work in or own and, importantly, what it will mean to their children and grandchildren.

For a long time, well before the Obama administration began talking about health care, I have been arguing that we need to make improvements to our health care delivery system. Many folks can't afford the escalating medical costs associated with illness and old age. Folks with preexisting conditions can't change jobs without losing their health insurance, and small business owners struggle to provide health coverage to their employees. I would have welcomed the chance to work to see that these problems were addressed.

I co-chair the Rural Health Care Coalition, a group of more than 100 Members of the House, Republicans and Democrats, who work continually to see that patients in States like Kansas have access to affordable, quality health care. I am extremely disappointed that President Obama and Speaker *Pelosi* have chosen to go their own way on this issue with no input from those of us who disagree with them on what is best for America.

Many times in this Chamber, I have outlined commonsense things that we could and should do: medical liability reform to eliminate lawsuit abuse that forces the practice of expensive defensive medicine; allowing the purchase of insurance policies across State lines; creating State high-risk pools to address preexisting conditions and provide uninsured Americans access to insurance; encouraging better fitness, diet, nutrition; implementing health information technology that upgrades our outdated health records system and streamlines costs, reduces medical errors and eliminates redundant medical tests; allowing small businesses to pool together to negotiate and purchase health insurance. These and many more could and should be done.

While I know there is much to do, almost none of these ideas are contained in the bill that my colleagues and I will be voting on tomorrow.

I now strongly object to the plan Speaker *Pelosi* is forcing upon the House. This bill is too big and tries to change too much at once. Instead of working to improve our current system, which the majority of Americans like, this plan will create a massive expansion of government. History demonstrates that government programs are significantly more expensive than estimated. This plan would raise taxes and increase the deficit. It is propped up with budget gimmicks that will greatly expand our deficit.

The bill requires 10 years of tax increases and 10 years of Medicare cuts to pay for only 6 years of so-called benefits.

This plan is the Senate-passed health care bill. It is the same bill that America cried out against in December because it was pieced together through vote peddling and backroom deals. Members who think this plan is good, they should vote ``yes." Members who don't think this plan is good, they should vote ``no." But this is much too important an issue for the usual deal of politics and cutting deals with backroom promises.

This plan reduces the chance that all Americans will have access to quality care. In rural America, our health care delivery system is fragile as medical professions are caring for an aging population across a wide geographic area. Medicare reimbursement rates determine whether doors stay open and whether doctors and nurses remain in communities. With Medicare cuts, it is likely that more hospital doors will close and fewer doctors will remain in Kansas. The government method of control is through price fixing, which leads to scarcity of doctors, nurses and medical innovation and the advancement of medical research.

Tomorrow's vote will be one of the most important cast during my time in Congress. If the bill should pass, I will work hard in an open and public way to repeal what Speaker *Pelosi* has done in darkness. Some have said we need to pass a bill because we have to do something, but what I think they really mean is that we have to pass a bill to do something right.

We can overcome the ``Washington knows best" attitude. Americans rightly are opposing the Washington, D.C. approach to changing health care, an approach that tramples upon our Constitution, diminishes personal responsibility, and reduces freedom of our children and the

prosperity of our Nation.